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## Home opens for science, tech studies

JOSH VERGES • JVERGES@ARGUSLEADER.COM • AUGUST 15, 2010

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At Sioux Falls' new \$12.5 million Career and Technical Academy, area high school students will cook and serve meals to school officials, build houses in a huge shed with airport hangar doors and work toward job certification in fields such as welding and auto technology.

The facility is a huge upgrade for several hands-on programs that had been scattered throughout the three public high schools. But some new offerings go well beyond souped-up shop classes.

Biomedical science students will begin class Monday trying to determine what killed a fictitious patient. They'll end the year writing a research grant proposal.

Meanwhile, pre-engineering students at the academy will act as professional designers and engineers, using 3-D modeling to create projects for customers.

"Those classes are probably more geared to students who want to go onto a four-year college or university," Principal Jim Kayl said. "They are going to be much more rigorous."

### Project Lead The Way: Math To Engineering

The biomedical sciences and pathway to engineering courses come from Project Lead The Way, a hands-on curriculum package that covers science, technology, math and engineering (STEM). Instructors Allison Hutchinson and Christy Carlson took accelerated two-week courses this summer to get prepare.

Hutchinson has taught Advanced Placement biology and said the PLTW curriculum is on par with the college-prep class.



Debbie Hoffman, a Career and Technical Education Academy board member, tours the media production room at Lincoln High School. Fellow school board member Darin Daby looks on. Career-oriented curriculum has gained increased emphasis. (Jay Pickthorn / argus Leader)



Maria Eckrich, Phillip Pap, Taylor DeRoose and Taylor Stueven prepare for an Advanced Placement stats tutorial in the studio at Lincoln High School. Southeast Technical Institute now is home to Career and Technical Academy classes. (Emily Spartz / Argus Leader)

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"The content is right up there with what students would need to know in AP biology," except there's a health focus, she said.

She describes the introductory class as "a bit like 'CSI' mixed with 'ER' with a little 'House' and 'Bones' thrown in."

Carlson is new to teaching, having left a career designing metal buildings. She said the engineering classes won't be easy but will appeal to students who like to build and create.

"It will be challenging, but then again I think the

students will enjoy it because it's so hands-on," she said.

### State Emphasizes Career-Oriented Paths

The new courses coincide with a state-led movement toward career exploration during high school. Updated graduation requirements give CTE classes a higher profile, and students will begin building personal learning plans in eighth grade which connect their career interests with high school classes and internships.

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Carl Hoffman works on a logo design in May for the Career and Technical Education Academy building in the media production area at Lincoln. Some CTE courses will continue to be offered at Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt.

#### ABOUT CAREER AND TECHNICAL ACADEMY

The Sioux Falls School District built the \$12.5 million Career and Technical Education Academy on open land south of Southeast Technical Institute.

**STUDENT SIZE:** The facility has room for 950 high school students, but 10 neighboring districts are paying tuition for 200 slots.

**Classes:** They last 110 minutes and are held during three blocks of time each day. Students who take classes there will spend the majority of their school days in traditional high schools.

**SITES:** Some CTE courses will continue to be offered at the three traditional public high schools in Sioux Falls with the upper-level courses held at the academy.

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The biomedical sciences and pre-engineering classes steer students toward math and science careers, a priority of the Obama administration.

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## Classes Might Benefit Southeast Tech, Too

Superintendent Pam Homan expects the CTE Academy will provide a boost to its neighbor, Southeast Technical Institute, which the school district operates. She said STI offers programs in high-demand career fields but struggles to fill them.

"We have to make a tough decision to cut a program because students don't know what it is," she said. Courses and internships through the academy will introduce students to those fields.

Canton became the state's first school district to use Project Lead the Way when it introduced pre-engineering courses in 2008.

Former principal Cory Strasser said that of the 10 students in the first class, six went on to study engineering in college.

"It is career exploration, but one of our selling points was you don't have to be an engineer," Strasser said. "The skills that you learn in those classes transcend the majority of jobs you'll ever have."

Reach Josh Verges at 331-2335.



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Maria Eckrich, Phillip Pap, Taylor DeRoose and Taylor Stueven prepare for an Advanced Placement stats tutorial in the studio at Lincoln High School. Southeast Technical Institute now is home to Career and Technical Academy classes. (Emily Spartz / Argus Leader)